



UNDER STORY

2014



Cover Art:
Merisunas by Alyxandra Shroy

Understory is an annual publication supported by the Department of English at the University of Alaska Anchorage.

Special thanks go to Provost Elisha "Bear" Baker, the UAA Club Council, and Special Projects Fund for their generous support of Understory 2014.

The journal showcases literary and artistic works by undergraduates, provides students with practical experience in producing a literary journal, and fosters relationships between graduate and undergraduate students and faculty.

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Table of Contents

Staff.....	iv
Letter from the Editors.....	vi
Caitlin KelleyRose, <i>Glass Blower</i>	2
Matthew Caprioli, "Writing".....	3
Jenna! Roosdett, <i>Obsolete Evolution</i>	5
Alecia Gottlob, "Permafrost".....	6
Aubrey Morgan, <i>Phoenix</i>	15
Bailey Arend, <i>Untitled</i>	16
Elise Schapira, "Ratio".....	17
Danielle Morgan, <i>Tripping</i>	18
Ian Gaskins, "Abiogenesis".....	19
Jade Aiah, <i>My Heart Beats for You</i>	21
Clinton Jackson, "Meeting of the Fingerprint Lines".....	22
Danielle Morgan, <i>You Are No Stranger</i>	23
Ellen Davis, <i>Nightmare Fuel</i>	24
Forest Wilson, "Cane-Sugar".....	25
Chelsea Klusewitz, <i>Gossamer Strands</i>	30

Chelsea Klusewitz, <i>Panthera Gold</i>	31
Elise Schapira, "Butterfly".....	32
Dréa Moore, <i>A Mantis Too Far</i>	33
Danielle Larsen, <i>Long and Winding Road</i>	34
Sarah Reeves, "Chasing Shadows".....	35
Alyxandra Shroy, <i>Merisunas</i>	36
Alyxandra Shroy, <i>Chequer Grove</i>	37
John Cripps, <i>Modzilla</i>	38
Craig Miley, "Beans".....	39
Aja Stewart, <i>Little Red and Mr. Wolf</i>	40
Wolfgang Q. Olsson, "In Memoriam, Joel Fletcher Armstrong".....	41
Anastasia Ward, <i>Glance</i>	43
Danielle Larsen, <i>Courage</i>	44
Sarah Reeves, "Uranium Waltz".....	45
Emily Hall & Sarah Arnell, <i>Danger</i>	49
Ellen Davis, <i>Journey to the West</i>	50
Wolfgang Q. Olsson, "Antumbra".....	51
Xenia Joy, <i>Roaring Like a Lion</i>	55
Craig Miley, "Pre-boarding".....	56
Patrick Romain Jr., <i>Untitled</i>	67
Matthew Caprioli, "How Do You Say a Word?".....	68
Aubrey Morgan, <i>Fishing for Doom</i>	70
Contributors.....	71

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Dear Writing,
 we trend on ice,
 a fracture away from a fall
 and a lasting abyss
 whose caved view is not so pretty,
 but bruised blue and shingled
 with concrete ice.

You effuse me.
 My burdens become breathe,
 skating along the lake,
 incapable of cracking the porous glass
 into evil.

Writing, I give my burdens to you.
 Without your help,
 They will calcify into anchors,
 a plummeting heart,
 a soul wistful for reasons,
 two hands gasping
 for rope.

Obsolete Evolution

Jenna! Roosdett

Silkscreen Print



Permafrost

Alecia Gottlob

The invisible line that separates the day that winter takes her first breath from the day before forbids us from going back. All of those proclamations made that the heat was unbearable, those days we cursed the sun, have come back to haunt us. Summer has banished us to the cold and the dark until we've learned our lessons and come to appreciate her once again.

But I have no summers left and no amount of penance can win my renewal.

—

I had decided on a Tuesday precisely because of its insignificance. It wasn't a day whose coming each week would wallow in their stomachs; not like a Sunday. Sunday carries weight, there's church and family brunch. Easter is on a Sunday. It was just Tuesday, a stumble on the march toward Friday, a barely felt incline before hump-day, and not Monday, dreaded on its own.

But Tuesday, when I came home, (I had just been to see my mother; I had stolen a bottle of her pain pills) I saw the dragon in my kitchen. There wasn't really a dragon

of course. I think I even knew he wasn't real when I saw him, but the panic attack came on anyway, I have little control over these things anymore. My neighbor heard me screaming, I must have pulled the fire extinguisher from the wall. I covered my apartment in foam and they took me to the hospital until my private physician worked out my release.

Wednesday, I remembered it had been my sister's anniversary when she was still married—besides, it was hump-day. I settled on Thursday night, I decided late at night would be best, 2:00 am. I know that's technically Friday, but not really, not the way we look at night anyway.

Thursday evening, I was at the diner. It's just down the street from my apartment. I'd been spending a lot of time there the past couple of months. You can go a little stir-crazy sitting alone in a small apartment all night; all you hear are sirens and drunks shouting down below, the guy across the hall from me leaves for work every morning at 4:00 and his muffler drags across the pavement. I don't know how I used to sleep through all of that—when I used to sleep.

When the girl came in, Jeanie, the plump, pig-tailed graveyard waitress had just put in my order: biscuits and gravy, club sandwich, chicken strip dinner, and strawberry shake. I figured if a convict gets to order a last meal, I sure as hell deserved one. I don't know why, I really wasn't even hungry.

I shouldn't have been staring at her, but in my defense, I didn't think she'd notice. I'm the kind of guy that is extraordinary only in the degree that I am ordinary; medium height, medium build, brown hair, brown eyes, glasses. My name is Joe Smith—no kidding. No one notices me.

She sat up on one of the barstools at the counter. "Coffee," she said. She looked at the menu the way people look at them when they don't plan on ordering anything, flipping it over a couple of times without really reading any of it. When she put it back in the little silver menu stand next to the silver napkin holder, I saw the scars on her left wrist. They were fairly healed by now, but no more than six months old. Maybe she had caught my eyes in the shine of the metal. She turned her head just a little over her left shoulder. I stiffened up, I tried to look down. Jeanie poured the coffee into a white cup and set it down. The girl took it, stood, and started my way. I was scared. It wasn't her hair, even though it was purple with black streaks, it wasn't her piercings, she had two in her nose and one in her lip, it wasn't her tattoo, I hadn't seen it yet. It was the way she looked at me, through me, like I was a book she'd already read, twice.

She slid into the seat across from me. "If you're going to do it, don't slit your wrists, takes too long, someone finds you and you spend a week under observation. I hear men don't usually do it like that anyway," she said. She kind of smiled, I think. I'm not sure.

I opened my mouth. I closed it again.

"I saw your order, and the way you were looking at my scars. Guys not thinking about killing themselves would've been looking at my ass instead."

Jeanie brought my milkshake and biscuits and gravy right then. I was thankful. I put the straw in the shake and the other end in my mouth. I still wasn't hungry. The girl slid my plate to the middle of the table, picked up the fork on her side and took a bite. "I'm Lyra by the way,"

I'm sure she smiled that time.

"I'm Joe. If you don't have enough, I'll buy you something to eat," I said. It suddenly made sense that she would be talking to me, I thought.

"Nope, I'm okay. I have money." She took another bite and a big drink from her coffee cup. "So, what, did your wife leave you, dog die, lose your job, all of the above?" She was teasing me, I knew, but it didn't feel like she was being cruel.

The air around the wall behind Lyra started to waver; I could feel another hallucination coming on. I don't know why I cared so desperately that she didn't see me like that. God knows she wouldn't be the first. I rubbed my eyes hard with my fists and struggled to maintain. The wall stayed in place, there was no dragon.

"I'm sick. I'm going to die in the next few months and it's going to be unbearable, already is. I'd rather skip the worst of it." I had never been that blunt about it. It's an odd feeling to have settled on such a big decision. You'd think there would be some kind of nervousness or hesitation inside - that you couldn't really have resolved to such a thing as ending your life. There wasn't. I had.

"What do you have?" she asked, her tone as casual as if I had just told her I had bought a new shirt.

"Fatal Familial Insomnia, except in my case, it isn't familial. It was spontaneous," I said.

She raised her eyebrows. It was probably the same expression I wore when I was diagnosed. "Insomnia? You are dying from insomnia? Why don't you just get some Ambien?"

"It's more complicated than it sounds. It's a disturbance in the proteins of the brain. The symptoms

just present mostly as insomnia. The first stage, you have panic attacks, insomnia, sudden phobias. I had to get rid of my cat because of that last month. Never been scared of cats before. The second stage is hallucinations and even worse panic attacks," I skipped telling her about the dragon. "The third stage, you stop sleeping altogether and start losing weight. The final stage is dementia, I'll end up mute, and then I'll die." Now I sounded like I was telling her about a shirt.

"Wow. So how long do you have. I mean, if you don't, you know, do whatever first."

"I haven't slept in five days, so maybe a couple of months till I hit the last stage."

Jeanie came, refilled Lyra's cup, and switched the empty plate with the club sandwich. I hadn't taken a bite, but my milkshake was gone. Lyra ordered me a cup of decaf and a side of ranch.

"So, what are you gonna miss, if there is someplace after where you can miss things from? What was your favorite thing about life?" Nothing fazes her, I swear.

I couldn't think of anything. Not a single thing that I would miss not doing. No great memory to offer her. Just outside the window, the dragon appeared, staring in at me. Even he looked sorry for me. Smoke curled out of his nose lazily and his tail lay flat and still on the sidewalk.

I had been a grocery store manager before the hallucinations became too powerful to hide. The other employees saw me as the enemy and I only spoke to the customers when they were pissed off. I lived alone, except for my cat, which was gone now. Women didn't notice me; I had dated a few, but I was always the nice guy, the rebound between assholes. I knew a few guys who I had a

drink with at the bar once in a while, but none that I'd call friends exactly.

I read, I watched too much T.V.

I changed the subject. "Why did you?" I nodded at her wrist.

"Couldn't sleep either, chasing dragons you know?"

I was stunned for a second. "Want mine?" I asked. I was serious. I feel stupid now; I didn't know what she meant.

She laughed. "Just got outta treatment."

"Oh, dragons. I get it." She laughed harder.

"How old are you Lyra?"

"Twenty-two"

"Twenty-two. Why aren't you out with friends tonight? You surely have better things to

do than hang out with a suicidal thirty-five year old in a diner."

"You're right," she said. "Let's go." She stood and looked at me, one eyebrow raised.

She was serious.

I looked toward Jeanie who was talking to the cook over the slide window.

"You aren't hungry anyway." She grabbed my jacket from the back of my seat and held it out, just far enough from me that I had to stand to reach it. I left \$40 on the table and followed her outside.

She hailed a cab and gave him an address, 39 east 103rd. I had never been to that part of the city; it was busy for that time of night. Crowds stood in lines outside of clubs with neon flashing lights, strobes pulsed out onto

the anticipating faces as the doors opened and closed again. Big men stood in front of the doors, pointing at people here and there, letting them in, and shaking their heads at others. She paid the driver and we got out. She headed toward one of the clubs, the one with the longest line. She held tightly onto my sleeve as she wove her way to the front. The bouncer nodded and let us in.

I began to tell her that I shouldn't be there, I should go home, it was almost midnight. I don't think she could hear me over the loud bass of the music. If she could, she didn't care. She kept pulling me further in until we ended up at the back, at a black painted door. Inside was a small group, maybe ten people sitting around a circular table, they were lounging on two white rounded couches or sitting on the floor, leaning against them. A couple stood when they saw Lyra, one climbed over the back of the couch to hug her.

They studied me for a second until Lyra said, "This is Joe." I guess that was good enough for them. They scooted over to make room for us. They were passing a bottle of Jägermeister around. A girl with blue dreadlocks handed it to me. I took a drink and passed it to Lyra; I'm usually more of a beer kind of guy. I must have had about five more drinks. I was really feeling it, becoming a little dizzy by the conversation, something about a road trip. Next thing I knew, everyone was standing, looking at me. The blue haired girl asked Lyra if I was okay.

"Never better," she said, helping me up.

We piled in an old grey van that was parked out in the alley. I had a sudden impulse to confess. "I was looking at your ass Lyra," I whispered. Everything started spinning after that. I could hear the heavy beat of wings above the

van as it cruised down the highway. The bumper tapped a log barrier that bordered a little cliff overlooking a beach when we stopped.

Little particles of moisture, bordering on an early frost swirled in the moonlight. I could see three of the figures as silhouettes, almost to the water by the time I was out of the van and past the barrier. As Lyra and I caught up, a trail of clothing appeared on the sand. I stopped.

"That water is freezing. You aren't going swimming are you?" I asked her.

"WE ARE." She pulled her shirt over her head and kicked down and off her jeans. She had nothing on underneath except for the enormous dragonfly tattoo that covered most of her back, its wings staying just inside of her own contours. She turned to face me.

I'm not dead yet. It was no time before my clothes were piled beside hers. She ran toward the water and I, behind her. I stopped still at the edge of the shore. The guy everyone kept calling Zig ran past me, diving forward as soon as it was up to his knees. I took a deep breath and made my entrance at a run. It was like tiny bursts of electricity dancing across my scalp, incredible enough to overpower the painful pricking sensation the cold drove into my feet and hands. I felt more aware of every centimeter of my body than I think I had ever been.

We didn't stay in for long. At least it didn't seem like it. There was a small bonfire on the beach when we came out, a few already dressed and sitting beside it. We sat down. My glasses were covered with sand. A pretty blonde named Kylee poured some of whatever was in her green bottle over them, wiped them with her still unbuttoned shirt and handed them back. We stayed by

the fire, passing around a fresh bottle of whiskey until we decided we weren't going to get any warmer or dryer, then we walked back to the van and drove back to the club.

Lyra was lying down, passed out in one of the seats and Jude, the driver, said he'd take her back inside and let her sleep it off there. The sky was becoming a hazy grey when I got out of the van.

It was Friday and I wasn't sure what to think of that; my head was still swimming. I walked down the alley planning to get a taxi home and then figure it out. I was around the corner before I noticed my wallet was gone. I turned around, hoping it had just fallen out in the van. When I got back, the sliding door of it was open. Lyra was sitting just inside, her feet hanging out, swinging back and forth. She was holding my wallet in between her thumb and forefinger.

"What are you going to do, Joe? Ruin everyone's perfectly good Friday? You can't kill yourself on a Friday. You should hang around until Monday. Monday's suck anyway."

Phoenix

Aubrey Morgan

Watercolor



Ratio

Elise Schapira

In trigonometry
 Relationships are calculations
 And you were a calculated risk
 Measuring the angles and sines
 A delicate variable tangent to me
 Leading to a ratio of fingertips

Untitled

Bailey Arend

Stoneware with Iron Wash



Abiogenesis

Ian Gaskins

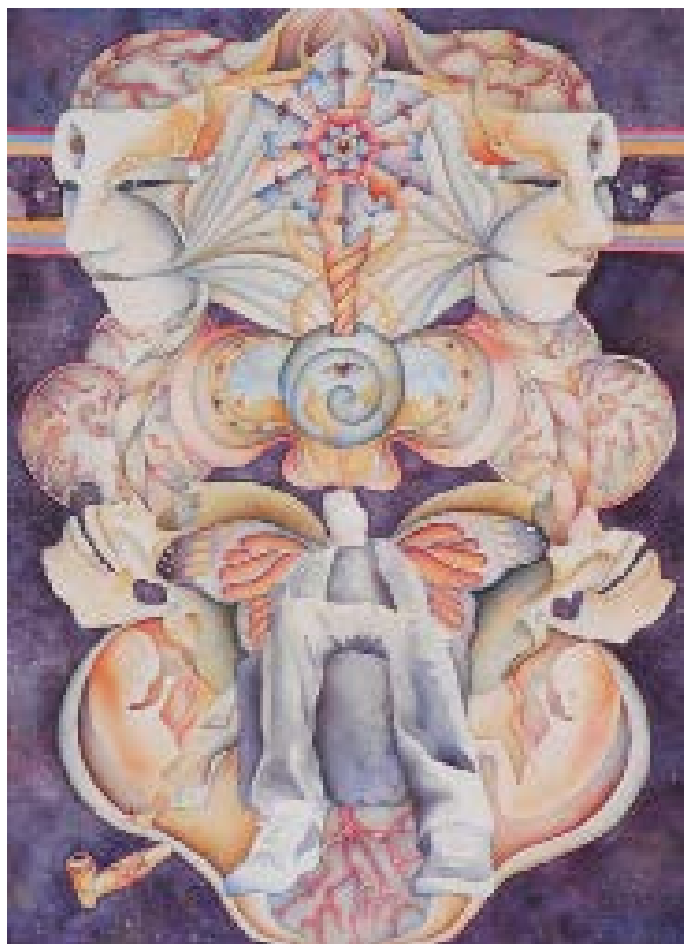
He had purchased thirty-six light bulbs for a purpose. He purchased thirty-six cylindrical stands of differing heights to jut upward from his basement floor, and hold his light bulbs aright. Two sets of eighteen. The currents were stymied every 4 seconds (the electrician used the words "parallel" and "series"). Every day he would tap the bulbs, one, two, three... then retire to his stool. He sat at the end of the basement. Pulsing bulbs. If the overhead lights were off, then he was at the edge of the universe, witnessing the death of old stars and birth of the new. All of this was his design.

He practiced his harp on a stool before thirty-six glimmering suns. That is how many strings his harp had. Four and a half octaves to explore. The song he was working on did not have a resolution. The fourths clashed with the fifths and the chaotic intervals were tangled. His fingers tried to pry open the spaces and palpate the rhythm, but always it ended suspended in the air. Hovering, a facsimile of harmony, with no completion to find, not yet.

Tripping

Danielle Morgan

Watercolor, Winner of the Turnagain Art Award!



My Heart Beats for You

Jade Aria

Watercolor & Ink



One day his foot shattered a light bulb. And now he counted, one two... thirty-five. Thirty-five. Seventeen lights brightened while the other set dimmed. He didn't clean up the shards of glass, not then. Instead he searched his house (there has to be one) and unscrewed any bulb he could find; all were of a different watt and voltage. He tried a few in the aperture, but they were not the same intensity as the others. What does he do with his hands now? He would buy a bulb in the morning, yes he would, maybe some extras as well, but where would he keep them? To be superfluous is to be clutter. Structure demands order, and order is constructed with regards to necessity.

He held his arms across his chest, and his sigh was almost a sob. He walked over to his harp and untied a string, breathing easier. But the notes would sing differently now. This wasn't the case, it couldn't be. He played. Despite his wet sock distracting him, the melody was almost the same as it was before. Yet there was an empty space where sound and light should be, and when his finger reached to complete the chord it only felt openness.

What is creation without loss? After he fixed the light bulb and retied the string, he asked himself that rhetorically and played on. Then he found it. The tone and placement to resolve his song.

Meeting of the Fingerprint Lines

Clinton Jackson

The lines of a fingerprint convened one day,
Holding a forum for what each had to say.
"There is none like us, the shape we bear,"
Yet one line, his request laid bare:
"I shall on another finger place my sole line;
I dislike the lines of my sides,
in their swirls of rhyme."
"But how, cried all,
If you leave, our unique print will fall..."

So too the cultures of man in their line,
No one race anew a species grows spry.
No one singular can by all be defined,
A shock to all or none, each culture refined.
Each moves within its own weave,
For if one tries to leave,
And the other dismantles, ah!
The print of mankind its one species will fall...

You Are No Stranger

Danielle Morgan

Ink



Nightmare Fuel

Ellen Davis

Digital Photography



Cane-Sugar

Forest Wilson

Winner of the Understory Literary Award!

Harry saw everything better with the streetlights on. He knew most people were in their beds, dogs sleeping at their feet, SUVs tucked into garages. Harry had room to see the bus stops and the sidewalks. He watched the darkness frame every shop-sign and streetlight. It framed the dusty bulbs and the empty doorways. And the dusty bulbs bled an orange hue that blurred and coagulated with the blackness. The sidewalks cringed as he looked at their naked pavement. The doorways were locked. Everything was indistinct but visible, a view through the night's cataracts. Harry kept driving.

He thought about stopping somewhere. Maybe a restaurant. Maybe he'd go buy something. Maybe he would finally start a conversation with someone. Harry labored over his thoughts. He should stop anywhere as long as he found someone to talk to, about anything. Harry passed a family diner, wanting to stop the car. People drinking warm coffee under yellow light, talking to each other over the ambient televisions that hung from the walls. Three or four people per table.

He idled under the next red light, and noticed the grey hair that curled around his knuckles. A homeless woman was peeing by the crosswalk. She was squatting with her sweatpants around her ankles. She laughed and so did the man standing next to her. Steam rose around her ass, greased knots of hair hanging from her head. Harry watched the urine pool around her feet and melt the frost beginning to take hold of the pavement. He wondered if she was dating the dirty laughing man, the man who held her bag for her; Harry even envied the dirty drunken man; I could hold someone's bag. He put her and the red light in his mirrors; I could drink with someone and freeze my ass all night. Harry kept driving. The next left would take him to his neighborhood. Harry thought about the diner again. Maybe there was thirteen or fifteen people in there. Everyone talking about something. Maybe they didn't have anything good to say either, but they could still say it. Harry took the left towards his street.

His neighborhood belonged to little houses and dilapidated apartment buildings. The houses were old and the people inside loved them. They left cheap things out in the lawns. Lawn Love Monuments: garden gnomes, basketball hoops, bicycles, barbecue grills, kinked hoses, ugly brown flower-pots, dead Chia pets. Monuments of children and wives and husbands and fathers and sons and mothers and daughters. Harry lived in one of the apartments. His kitchen window gave view of a metal slide so old it would collapse underneath the weight of Harry's gaze.

Harry didn't think about his apartment or his parking space that lay ahead of him. He thought about the diner. There had to be a woman at the diner, someone he could hold the smudged glass door open for. Harry

smelled this phantom woman's hair, as he drove past another basketball hoop and another lawn. This hoop looked well used. Harry remembered that when he was a kid he'd bought one of those things that sent the ball back to him every time he made a shot. A yellow metal ramp that hooked on to the base of the rim. It made it easier to play alone, no chasing after the ball. In the winter he'd put the yellow thing and the hoop away and play catch with himself. Harry tossed the football up in the air, diving into the snow to catch it. Up and down the driveway, while his mom sat inside. Maybe she was watching TV, he didn't know.

Harry's woman would smell like cane-sugar and real cocoa. He would pick her up after her shifts at that yellow diner. She'd slide a piece of apple pie down the counter, one inch at a time, as she walked towards him, smiling with only the corner of her mouth. Harry's woman would smile because she remembered the night before. He would hold onto her knee as he drove them home. Every night she could ease a piece of pie over to Harry, then he'd take her home. They would pass all the apartments and pull up to a big green lawn, full.

Harry slowed down when he passed the used hoop and the lawn. There weren't any children playing at that hour, but Harry slowed down out of habit. He always stared at the children playing with their dads. He loved seeing the fathers pass the ball back. Letting the kids shoot again and again. Harry pictured a family playing in the darkness as he drove by. An opaque haze of unobtainable fulfillment obscured Harry's fantasy of the family, but this allowed him to believe they were smiling.

He accelerated around more houses and more

apartments and more monuments. He began to drift into his head. He thought about his vague woman. A woman that didn't exist. Harry thought about turning around and finding her in the diner. He would say something good. She would laugh when Harry said it. They would leave together. He could exist with this woman. Harry wound around his thoughts and passed more houses and more lawns. Harry's thoughts twisted into dense knots and Harry kissed her.

The eyes pierced through the blackened air like small, concentrated streetlights. Harry drove even faster, trying not to hit him. He couldn't have stopped in time. It sounded like nothing. Barely noticeable. A bump. But he knew what it was and Harry stopped the car. He grabbed his forehead and squeezed. His headlights shot their two dull orange beams at the naked sidewalk. Harry left his car and stood in front of a sleeping house. He stared at a small clump of fur and then a black mass.

Damn it. God damn it.

Harry knew the dog. It belonged to the quiet home he was parked in front of. Harry had seen the dog in the yard.

Why was it out? Why was it on the road? Harry knelt on the pavement. He knew he should have stopped at the diner before. The weight of shame made Harry heavy. He was ashamed that he didn't at least try. The possibility of failing always paralyzed him. Why couldn't he have gone there and said something good to some woman? Harry ran the mistake over in his head. He had to tell the family. It was late but not too late. He lifted the dog. It took a second try. Harry didn't notice the blood on his shirt from the first attempt. He trembled, lifting with

his back. Harry brought the dog to the front porch and wondered what he was doing. Its face was mutilated and he was standing there holding the body at the family's doorstep, in the middle of the night like a ghoul. Harry realized it was the dog's ear he saw next to the black-mass, a dead clump of fur. Harry set the body on the steps and thought about knocking. Harry couldn't knock. He stood at the door staring at the body. Harry imagined the children and wives and husbands and fathers and sons and mothers and daughters staring at the bloody pile he set on the steps. Harry could not knock. His vision melted and everything fell in mercurial lines and Harry collapsed by the dog and held it in his arms and he said you idiot and strained his back not noticing the blood and the fur that clung to his shirt smelling like dead rubber and iron. Harry carried the dog to his back seat and set it down.

The lights in the diner's parking lot hummed. Harry sat down at a table. Everything was melting. His reflection stained the metal napkin dispenser. Harry noticed all the blood. He stared at a middle aged waitress across the room as she poured someone a cup of something.

Gossamer Strands

Chelsea Klusewitz

Watercolor



Panthera Gold

Chelsea Klusewitz

Watercolor



Butterfly

Elise Schapira

Hello, little butterfly
Watch the colors die
Flutter the torn useless wing
Let not your fear contaminate everything
Scarred, hideousness and twisted
Now your fluttering blackheart dies
Hello, broken little butterfly

A Mantis Too Far

Dréa Moore

Ceramic, Wood, & Metal Tubing Sculpture



Long and Winding Road

Danielle Larsen

Oil Painting



Chasing Shadows

Sarah Reeves

They smile and tell us
to fly
on wax feather compliments,
so in the light we soar
chasing phantoms of
dreamers and believers:
our shadows who bear no wings.

They smile and tell us
to climb
and with our faux pinions we rise,
ascend each curling wisp of cloud
as it brushes our cheeks
and paints our shadows closer.

They frown and tell us
to smile
so high up are we,
our paraffin wings melt
and we fall
down, all the way down
with our shadows trailing behind us.

Merisunas

Alyxandra Shroy

Watercolor & Ink, Winner of the Understory Cover Art Award!



Chequer Grove

Alyxandra Shroy

Watercolor, Copic Markers & Ink



Beans

Craig Miley

John tried with great effort to hold the fork. He couldn't understand why his hands refused to cooperate. They were stiff and cold, sure, but he'd dealt with that on many of the camping trips he'd been on in his youth. Sitting in the cold, eating beans out of a can next to the soggy remnants of his amateur campfire, it had been difficult then, but he'd managed. Now he could barely grip the damn thing.

Perhaps there was something in his memory that he'd lost that he needed to accomplish the task. If there was, he clearly couldn't remember what that might be. He dropped the fork. It clacked solidly against the open skull he had sitting in his lap, before landing with a resounding *shplock* into the mostly uneaten brain inside it. John moaned. One of his fellow zombies passing by gave him a look and groaned. John glared and groaned back. Yes, he was going to finish eating this, and yes, he was going to use his fork.

Modzilla

John Cripps

Adobe Illustrator



Little Red and Mr. Wolf

Aja Stewart

Watercolor



In Memoriam Joel Fletcher Armstrong Wolfgang Q. Olsson

Winner of the Hayden Carruth Award!

*"The grey rain-curtain of this world rolls back,
and all turns to silver glass..."*

—J.R.R. TOLKIEN, *THE RETURN OF THE KING*

See how swift
clouds pass a point?
The old plastic house
run-down with snowy water
Still sister plays within
and the bowman comes
his fletchings clearer
his young heart nearer
red hair in the dirt
See how he runs?

Roots grow through
the soggy floor
and the walls falter
reclining wearisome with weight
Pale brittle grass in rings
Cow parsnip that we slew
with blades of wood
and heroes in our hearts

Then in Spring
the sobs came
and he walked with shadows
to an early grave.
Brother, our dreams were real

Adobe Photoshop



Courage

Danielle Larsen
Aluminum Cast Sculpture



Uranium Waltz

Sarah Reeves

I feel the words attempt escape through cracked lips, even as my breath catches in my throat. The air fights me with each inhale and flees readily as I expel it. Before I can stop myself the words slink out, apprehensive, like a beaten animal. "Do you remember when we were kids?" I manage to tug my lips upward into a smile. My greatest ability, she'd told me many years ago—I am always able to smile.

She does remember, I know. She has to, it's so vivid to me. Not so long ago we were kids, prancing through neighbors' gardens and muddy stream beds. Fireflies swirled around us in hypnotic patterns. She caught them sometimes, held them against her scalp until the insects latched onto her hair—a flashing, golden crown. One fell to her eyelashes. Her eyes squinted tight, emphasizing youthful, round cheeks, in the pale moonlight. She giggled so hard she shook with the effort. All of the fireflies took the opportunity to make their escape. She gives me no answer to my question, but I know. She remembers. She promised to never forget.

My shoulders ache under her weight. She starts to slip in my grasp, her legs drag the ground. I stop, I must. But I can't stop, not here, not where the ground threatens to suck idle feet under and ash piles so high it swallows the remains of trees and houses like stagnant waves of a grey ocean. There is little left. My heart beats with a percussion that threatens to tear my chest apart. I drop to my knees and shift her to better get her situated on top of me. A cloud of ashy dust rises around my boots and knees. It catches in the sweat beaded on my forehead and paints dark lines on my brow and cheeks as it slides toward my lips. Layers of soot so thick it's cracked in some places, revealing reddened, angry skin beneath. I can taste it, the stench of it fills my nose. My fingers pop as I drag her back up onto my shoulders, my knuckles swollen and red from the strain. A hangnail catches in her shirt fabric as three fingers slip and tears a red line down to the first, rounded joint. I don't feel the pain.

As I try to rise, my knees refuse. I shift her weight, my weight, pulling my boots out of the line of soot that creeps up their edge. "Remember when I had the flu?" I cough. Again the words come before I can stop them. They hang in the air briefly and then fade away as if I never said them at all. I find her slack fingers with my own and squeeze them. So slender and dainty, especially against my callused, working hands. They were soft then, too, as she clutched at my blankets while I lay in bed. She spent days and nights alongside me, perched on a chair stolen from the dining room table as she thumbed through books and magazines. When night fell, she pushed her chair up against my bedside and lay on the mattress. I held her hand then, too, her fingers cool as a midnight breeze against my fever. Her touch made me

smile. The moonlight caught in the hollows of her cheeks and silvered her pale lashes. A porcelain doll.

But now the moon's luminescence mostly hides behind clouds. Its lack of light paints her a banshee, emphasizing the darkness around her eyes and the bones in her face. Her skin is pulled so tightly against her skull that each line is stark.

Wind whips ash, flinging it into my eyes and nose and mouth. I free my hand from hers to wipe away the soot but only succeed in spreading it around as it cakes itself on my skin. It grits between my teeth. The bitterness makes me retch, but there's nothing left to come back up. My abdomen spasms with the effort and burns with exhaustion. I nearly fall forward, but instead I use the momentum to climb back to my feet. My lungs heave for air. "You looked so pretty in your dress." Like a queen. No church, no reception; we left even the officiant behind. Just the two of us and the fireflies. So perfect, she was, as she twirled, her gown scraping the surface of the grass. It stained but she didn't care. She'd never wear it again, she said, as she stripped her heels and spun—round and round. I caught the insects between my fingers, gentle so as not to squish them. She never did when she handled them. Her fingers were far too delicate. I placed the fireflies in her hair, tousled from her swaying. They clung to her lace, flashing brilliantly in the darkness. When her feet grew sore, I let her dance on mine. She was weightless, balanced on my toes. I wrapped my arms around her waist and held her against me. She nestled her head into my lapel; the moonlight sculpted her into a marble Venus. She shut her eyes and hummed. No words, we needed none. Our feet moved in time: one two three, one two three. And the fireflies twinkled around us.

I walk, careful and purposeful with each step because I know if I go down again, there will be no getting back up. The moon's effulgence shatters on the earth, its light fragmented by the broken arms of dead trees and wisps of sooty clouds. Piles of ash grab hold of boots and threaten to steal them away. A twisted branch reaches up with bony fingers and tangles itself in laces. I fall. Powder fills the air around us, covering skin and fabric alike in a layer of charcoal. I manage to roll, but little else.

She lies beside me, arms drawn up under her head. In the moon's starkness, I can see her features. The grime hides her hollow cheeks and taut jaw. It replaces sharp lines with soft ones. Flecks catch the light and glitter like stars. Above us, real stars flicker. They dance in and out of clouds, blur and swirl the longer I stare, fading in and out of brilliance like a firefly's glow. I catch her hand again, cradling icy fingers in my palm, and I smile.

Danger

Emily Hall & Sarah Arnell
Film Photography Collaboration



Journey to the West

Ellen Davis

Digital Photography



Antumbra

Wolfgang Q. Olsson

1899

Fairbanks, Alaska

A woman in the dark
 of a snowy cold night
 held a blanket in her arms
 to keep it warm.
 She hurried from the carpenter
 to the lowland river shacks
 her feet slipped and sliced
 her cloak hardly warded off
 the sharp cold.
 It hardly warded him off either.
 It hardly stayed soft & warm
 in the impending grip of cold
 so stark it feels like fire.
 It could hardly rustle
 as he touched her from behind.
 It could hardly fall
 evenly round her waist.
 It could hardly weep
 for it was so cold.

She reached the bridge.
 Simply it stared
 Frozen eyes in glittery glare.
 He had smiled
 She had winced
 Fingers like dull blades
 in the helpless corpse of a bird
 shot by hunters, rifles, bullets
 and felled to harvest
 in a Murder of Crows.

At least the sheep fur was warm.
 At least it stank less
 than whiskey breath
 than sweat and blood
 than cedar fumes she had inhaled.
 closed eyes.
 closed casket.
 The water was like soldiers
 poised for battle
 sheathed in cloaks
 of stone and rubble.

She shivered so coldly
 when fumbling with the door handle
 and breathed such smoke
 as a pig roasting on a fire—
 skewered unwillingly from behind,
 screaming! an apple lodged in its mouth,
 laughed at and sliced up and sawed into
 with the teeth of a sickly grinning saw
 chuckling back and forth
 and back and forth.

She put on the stove
 the pail, frozen through,
 She lit the flames
 to lick and lick and lick
 like the rough tongue of a dog
 on the breast of his sleeping mother.
 Like a runt unworthy
 in the corner moaning
 sobbing, freezing, wheezing, falling
 silent prayer
 to maternal fur.

She soaked the blanket
 like she soaked her soul.
 She washed away stains
 like memories in wine.
 She choked back gasps
 for her will, for the child.
 She turned down the lantern
 to feel a little less alone.
 She hung the blanket to dry
 and she sighed
 and lay down the wash rag
 like pain into Springtime ponds,
 and hope into cellars of fall.
 She wiped away the trails of trickle
 down her freckles and down her neck.
 She washed her mouth dry
 and combed her hair straight
 But as the moon rose in the window
 she stood instantly solitary
 wide of eye
 beating of heart.

That pocked face so often
who'd calmed her, somehow
that night scared her.
So giant, yellowish, grinning.
Its smile so unclear
but the gleam of unkempt teeth
and untrimmed scruff.
That breath so distant, so near.
She tore the curtains
over its gloating,
she capped the chimney
of mem'ries in-floating.

But in sleep they matter so little:
the whiskey, the fur,
the bridge, the blanket,
the breath, the flesh,
the moon, the water,
the fire, the ripple,
the mud, the tear,
the night.

It all faded away
and was covered in a cool frost
not unlike dew or mist
or a cloth on warm bread.

Thin sawdust over a reverberating whisper:
'Again, next moon.'

Roaring Like a Lion

Xenia Joy

Digital Photography



Pre-boarding

Craig Miley

Caleb stands still and holds his arms up, mimicking the yellow stick figure plastered on the wall in front of him. The TSA agent flips a switch and two thick panels swivel around him. This three-second x-ray, along with a “close” inspection of his carry-on’s contents, is supposed to determine whether or not he intends to turn his three-hour flight to Phoenix for his grandmother’s funeral into the next terrorist attack on America.

They wave him through and Caleb moves beyond the small, Plexiglas x-ray cage. He feels uncomfortable in just his socks. He is sure everyone does. The TSA must make you take your shoes off, not just to check them for bombs, but also to make you feel uncomfortable. Anyone who can walk about confidently in an international airport in just their socks is definitely a terrorist. Caleb grabs his things out of the grey bins. He feels like he’s holding up the line as he attempts to slip his shoes back on, juggle his boarding pass and I.D., and keep from dropping his laptop. He manages and walks forward into the terminal.

There are signs, but it’s all a jumble: terminal—1—left—2—right—restrooms—gates—6—8—gold

member lounge—shoe shine—upstairs—magazines—portable movie players. Caleb shoulders his bag and the laptop digs uncomfortably into his back as he walks. People sweep around him, their wheelie-luggage clacking rhythmically across the tile floor. Caleb picks up speed, not wanting to appear unimportant or lost amongst so many people tracing confident paths.

He steps onto a flat escalator. He knows it’s called a moving walkway, as the annoyingly calm woman on the speaker tells him before instructing him to watch his step, but he still only thinks flat escalator. Now propelled by means other than his own, Caleb feels comfortable simply standing and allowing the walkway to move him along like a product on an assembly line. The walls slide past him and he thinks of an old-time movie set where the actors sit in a stationary vehicle and pretend to steer as a screen displays a video of the world fading away behind them.

A children’s anti-drug poster contest has been conducted and the winners’ drawings have been displayed along the wall beside the walkway. Caleb spots one that reminds him of a drawing he’d done when he was little, back in the house they lived at in Missouri. The humidity seeping in through the foursquare windows as he drew thick, fat lines with the set of overly waxy crayons his father had pocketed the last time they could afford to go out to eat. He’d drawn a dog, or maybe a duck. Who knows? It had been red and blue. He remembers that. Restaurants never had the good colors like orange or purple, just red, blue, and green. Yellow, sometimes, if you were lucky.

—
“What do you think, Grandma?” he asked, holding up the picture he’d drawn on the classifieds.

"It looks wonderful," his grandmother said. Her voice made him feel safe.

"What is it?" his mother asked, that same short, round glass clutched in her hand.

"It's a..." He started to answer, but never finished.

"Why's it red and blue?" she continued.

"It doesn't matter why, Samantha," his grandmother said, "It's lovely, Caleb." She smiled at him from under her glasses. Caleb smiled back and tongued the gap where his tooth had fallen out the week before. His mother grunted and tipped her glass back, ice clacking as she sucked the last of the dark liquid through her yellow, slit-like teeth.

"Please, hold onto the handrails and watch your step as you leave the walkway. Thank you, and have a great day." Caleb manages to only trip a little bit as he steps off the flat escalator. He makes his way past a busy Starbucks before stopping to make sure his boarding pass corresponds with the direction he's chosen to wander in. It does and he continues on, the pleasant aroma of fresh coffee fading, replaced by the stiff smell of tile cleaner.

Gate 8F is crowded. The leather seats aren't quite uncomfortable enough to make Caleb feel like complaining, but they certainly don't lend themselves to a nap either. They're joined together in long segments and the oily metal armrests prevent him from lying down. Across the way, a heavyset man, wearing a button up shirt that isn't quite long enough to hide his hairy bellybutton, is snoring loudly. Caleb watches as the exercise ball shape of his stomach rises slowly with each breath. The omnipresent, female voice of the airport chimes in with the local time. Two hours until boarding.

A young couple sits a few seats down from him. They have a cat carrier sitting at their feet and the poor creature is mewling every few minutes or so, but they pay it no heed. They have eyes only for each other. Their love couldn't be more apparent if it had a giant roadway sign sitting beside them declaring it in blaring, orange bulbs. Caleb watches as the young man leans in and pecks her on the lips. She kisses him back. They pull apart, smile a secret smile that Caleb once knew, then start kissing more feverishly. The girl has a pink bow in her hair and Caleb thinks back to Mindy Pflaum's pink dress and the night of the Summer Fun Dance, a year after his father died in Kuwait.

Mindy stood crying in the doorway, drenched in what had been left of his mother's drink.

"You get that little slut out of my house," his mother said. Her voice caterwauled through the room, bouncing off walls and windows.

"You can't talk to her that way," Caleb shouted. He moved between Mindy and his mother. Mindy cried louder.

"Like hell I can't," his mother said. "This is my house and I'll do as I please."

"Mom—"

"Get her out. Now!"

"Samantha, what's going on?" His grandmother was standing at the top of the landing.

"Stay out of this mother." His mother glared at her.

"Why don't we talk about this?" his grandmother said, as she descended the stairs, her pink, ratty slippers making no sound.

His mother threw her glass at a wall and the resulting crash caused Mindy to shriek. She tore open the door and fled into the night, pink dress trailing behind her. Caleb turned on his mother, tightening his jaw, trying to make it square and sturdy like his father's had been. She glared back without blinking.

—

There are large windows behind the gate service desk, as if to allow everyone to have one last good look at the world before they force themselves into the cramped, metal cylinder that will take the magic of flying thirty-plus thousand feet in the air and make a nice jail cell seem more comfortable. Caleb stares out of them across the tarmac and into the overcast Seattle sky, trying not to make eye contact with his thin reflection. He catches himself thumbing the corner of the letter in his pocket back and forth again. The edge of the paper is now faded and worn and feels almost like an old dollar bill. He shakes his head and folds his hands in his lap.

"Is someone sitting there?"

Caleb turns and finds a face surprisingly close to his own. A woman with curly, blonde hair and a smile like sweet tea looks at him from her wheelchair as she points at his backpack.

"I, uh, no," he says. He grabs the backpack and moves it down between his legs.

"Thanks," she says. She spins her wheelchair around in a smooth half-circle. "Franklin," she says, "Franklin, come here. I found you a seat."

A boy, maybe seven or eight, is standing in a gap between the rows of chairs with his nose practically pressed up against the glass as he watches a plane roar

down the runway and go airborne. "Franklin," she says, drawing out the n. Caleb watches as the boy slowly pulls himself away from the window and weaves his way over to where they're sitting. He clammers up into the seat beside Caleb without hesitation.

"Franklin," she says, "this man was nice enough to give you a seat. What do you say?"

"Oh no, it's all right," Caleb says, trying hard not to feel uncomfortable and failing. The woman holds a finger up in his direction to silence him and continues to stare at her son. Franklin shuffles the rims of his Scotch-taped glasses and looks Caleb up and down in inspection. He squints his eyes and cocks his head up toward Caleb's face. Caleb pulls back a little bit.

Franklin nods once and his face breaks into a smile, "Thank you," he says.

Caleb smiles and nods. The boy pulls off his backpack and rummages around in it, spilling a few action figures and a Harry Potter book onto the ground. His mother sighs.

"Sorry about that," she says, looking back at Caleb again. "Gotta stay on top of the manners, you know."

Caleb nods. "I understand," he says, even though he's not sure he really does.

"Tamera," she says. She leans forward and extends her hand. Caleb quickly leans forward to take it. In his rush, he slips partway out of his seat and has to catch himself with his other arm. She laughs, a gentle, tinkling sound that makes Caleb think of a wind chime. Her hand is soft and small, but she helps pull him back upright with little difficulty.

He feels his cheeks heat up and he's sure he's red. "Caleb," he says. They stay that way for a moment before he realizes he's still holding her hand. He gives it a quick, awkward shake and pulls back. Tamera nods and smiles.

"What's waiting for you in Phoenix?" he asks. It feels like an odd question, but it's better than indulging his curiosity about her wheelchair.

"We're going to visit his father," she says, tilting her head in Franklin's direction. The boy is reading now. It's the third Harry Potter book, the one with Sirius, Buckbeak, and the Time Turner. It was one of Caleb's favorites. Or maybe that was just because the last week had him wishing he could turn back time.

"He's away on business?" Caleb asks.

"No. He lives there with his wife," she says.

"Ah, I see," Caleb says. He nods in what he hopes is an apologetic fashion. She smiles a fake parade-wave type smile that comes and goes in the same moment.

"You?" Tamera asks. He realizes that for a thin moment in time he's managed to forget. He thumbs the corner of the letter again and looks back out the window.

"Funeral."

"Oh," she says, "I'm sorry." She doesn't ask who, or what, or why, for which he is grateful.

"Do you have any kids?" she asks.

"No," he says.

"One day maybe?" she asks.

Caleb shrugs. "I'd have to find someone to have kids with first," he says. He regrets it. It sounds awkward and he hopes she doesn't think he's coming on to her.

Surprisingly, she laughs.

"I completely understand," she says. Tamera shakes her head back and forth with her lips pursed in a way that makes her chin wrinkle. "I thought I'd found someone when I met his father. Clearly, I was wrong."

"What happened?" Caleb asks. She looks at him and for a second he thinks she's going to tell him it's none of his business or that it's personal. She doesn't.

"When a car crash suddenly turns your high school sweetheart into a cripple, it can put a bit of a damper on your marriage," she says. He can feel the heat as her words pass by. "I suppose it didn't help that he was driving the car at the time either," she says, as if in afterthought. Caleb frowns.

"I'm surprised you can still visit," he says. "I don't think I could after that."

"Things change," Tamera says. "He hasn't. He may not be the best man, or even a good one, but he's still Franklin's father. Regardless of how I feel, Franklin deserves that."

Caleb's phone begins to ring. He scrambles around like an idiot attempting to remember where he's put it as his ringer blares. He realizes, at last, that he's skipped over it twice already in his check. It's in his pocket under the letter. He fumbles it out and reads the screen.

Mom.

Caleb hits decline. The number of missed calls beside her contact in his phone climbs from sixteen to seventeen. He stuffs it back into his pocket. Tamera is watching him. Her mouth is now a thin line and when he meets her eyes she cocks an eyebrow.

"Nobody," he says.

"I'm in a wheelchair, not blind," she says.

"We just—"

"Look," she says. Her voice is softer now, harder to hear over the buzz of Gate 8F. "You don't have to give me excuses," she says. He opens his mouth to deny it, but knows that is just what he was about to do, was doing right now, and was probably going to keep doing. "All I'm going to say is that, if it were Franklin..." She pauses, the boy is writing on a piece of paper. "I'd hope he'd pick up," she says.

"Mam." A young man is standing a few feet behind Tamera and has both hands behind his back; the U.S. Airways emblem stands out on his chest. "We're about to start boarding for those customers who have children or who might need extra time to get seated. Did you want some help at this time?"

"I think we'll manage," she says, "thank you." He nods and moves on to an elderly man wearing a veteran's ball cap coated in pins.

"Alright Franklin," she says. "Time to pack up." Tamera helps him toss a few items that are still on the floor back into his bag. Franklin pulls the backpack closed with a quick tug, slips it onto his back, and slides down off of the chair to stand next to his mother. Tamera turns back toward Caleb and holds out her hand one more time.

Caleb stands. It feels like the right thing to do, although he's not quite sure why. He knocks over his backpack and Tamera smiles. He takes her hand and shakes it. Just before she lets go she gives him a gentle squeeze.

"It was nice meeting you," she says.

"You too," he says.

She smiles and rolls her wheelchair around, heading for the service desk and the open door to the jetway beyond. Franklin remains where he is. He stands for a long moment looking up at Caleb as if viewing something he's never seen before. Caleb stares back, not sure what else to do. The boy shoves his hand into the pocket of his pants and fishes out a crumpled piece of paper. Franklin passes it to Caleb.

It's the letter, albeit crumpled and much less recognizable now. It must have fallen out of his pocket when he was pulling out his phone. The boy looks from Caleb, to the letter, to the floor, and back up.

"Franklin, come on." Tamera is glancing over her shoulder at them. She gives Caleb half a smile and gestures at Franklin.

The boy looks up at Caleb through his glasses, smiles and says, "Cool Smurf." Caleb glances down at his chest, unaware that he was even wearing his shirt depicting Happy Smurf. He looks up and the boy is gone. Caleb spots him, just a few feet behind his mother now. Franklin glances back over his shoulder and waves. Caleb holds his hand up in a half-wave and smiles. The woman at the service desk scans their boarding passes and they move into the jetway. Caleb watches until they're gone.

He sits back down and unfolds the letter. Smoothing it out against his knee, Caleb reads:

Caleb,

How is the new job? I'm sure you're glad to be done with school, huh? How are things with that girl you were telling me about? Was it Katy or Kathy? I'd

love to meet her. I'm sure she's wonderful.

*I go in for my third round of treatment next week.
I've got a tiny bit of hair back on my head. I feel like
a baby bird or maybe a peach.*

*Your mom is here. Don't worry; she's doing a good
job of taking care of me.*

*I know you're very busy with college, but maybe
we can talk on the phone sometime soon. I hope
this letter finds you well.*

*Love and miss you,
Grandma*

Below her signature, scrawled in hasty, crooked lines:

Sorry about your grandma.

Franklin

Caleb folds the letter and places it back in his pocket. He rubs his knuckle under his eye, clears his throat, and shoulders his bag. The laptop digs into his back again. He pulls his boarding pass back out and grabs his I.D. as well, unsure whether or not he still needs it out. Caleb moves to join the line for the jet way.

His phone begins to ring again.

Untitled

Patrick Romain Jr.
Digital Photography



How Do You Say a Word?

Matthew Caprioli

1.

Oily fabulation.
Ocular aggression.
Serpientes y escaleras.

The word of the day is coprographia.
Satyagrapha = Standing truth to power. Gandhi.
Cathexis. Freud said that a lot.
Non omnis moriar
(a one-time motto of Little Caesar's).
The quote of the day is Proverbs 14:13.

Sarsaparillas. Estocada.
Who was Eustace Tilley?
Androphilic gynephilia–Hypopnea!

In each moment
All words
Are not understood.

EB WHITE SAID DON'T USE "NOT"
DON'T BE SO NEGATIVE!!

Dorothy Parker used pseudonyms?
Why am I just hearing of Dave Brubeck?

2.

I look up all these words
And take up all these notes
And I still to this day
Can never successfully say
Scheherazade.

But I don't worry–
Who cares?!–
(Really. Who cares?)
Here's the takeaway:
The world was there inside of me
Before I said it properly.

Fishing for Doom

Aubrey Morgan

Oil Painting



Contributors

Here you will find biographies of the writers and artists featured in the journal as well as *Understory* 2014 staff. *Understory* staff are noted with an asterisk.

BAILEY AREND

Bailey Arend was born and raised in Anchorage, Alaska and studied chemistry before beginning his career in art. He continues to be inspired by patterns and forms in nature, especially the unique Alaskan environment. Bailey will begin the Masters of Fine Arts program at Alfred University in August 2014 and is excited to continue pursuing art in all its forms.

JADE ARIAH

Jade Ariah is a self-taught watercolor artist currently enrolled in her second year at UAA. She primarily works with water based paint and pen but has recently expanded into ceramics and graphite drawing through her studies. Jade's work mostly consists of surreal imagery stemming from dreams, general angst and a childlike imagination. You can find her selling her paintings this summer at Girdwood Forest Fair!

SARAH ARNELL

Sarah "Willow" J. Arnell grew up in Anchorage, Alaska where she has remained most of her life. She was always shutter happy, spending most of her childhood behind the button of a dime store camera. This pattern continued though out her entire life, and she eventually enrolled in the West High School's *Through The Arts* program. Willow saw the beauty and art in everything. Later, she enrolled in UAA's Art program where she continues to learn and experiment with many different mediums (glass blowing, photography, ceramics, printmaking, and drawing), while approaching her BFA. Shown here is a collaborative effort between her and Emily Hall where they attempt to push the boundaries of mediums.

MATTHEW CAPRIOLI

Matt wants to thank all the people who continue to help him learn about the world: Thornton Wilder, Carl Rogers, Suzanne Forster, Lorrie Moore, Aristophanes, and nearly everyone else in Alaska. He will graduate with a BA in English and Psychology this May, and plans to move to Manhattan with his friend Adam, who also enjoys the Greek vice. He will teach high school English, and may become one of those therapists who prescribes books instead of drugs.

JOHN CRIPPS

John Cripps is currently completing his BA in Arts with an emphasis on Graphic Design and an associate degree in Health Services & Paramedical Technologies. John spent 8 years in the United States Air Force as an Emergency Medical Technician and 3 years with Alaska Integrated Media as a Radio DJ. He is currently working as a student graphic designer for UAA's Academic Innovations & eLearning Department, guitarist for local band: The Modern Savage, owner and marketing/promotions manager for Animal Sounds Productions, and freelance graphic designer for Paperboy Graphics.

ELLEN DAVIS

Ellen Davis is a born-and raised California girl living in Alaska. She is back in school in pre-BFA status with an emphasis in Photography. Her ideal life would be to travel the world making beautiful images.

IAN THOMAS GASKINS

Ian Thomas Gaskins was born in Landstuhl, Germany on January 12, 1992. He has lived in Anchorage, Alaska for the past 18 years. He enjoys reading and writing, and works as a massage therapist.

ALECIA GOTTLÖB

Alecia Gottlob is a junior pursuing a Bachelor of Liberal Studies degree. After graduating, she plans to continue her studies in Sociology and English. She lives on the Kenai Peninsula where she spends her time reading, writing, and enjoying Alaska with her family.

EMILY K. HALL

Emily K. Hall was raised in Tulsa, Oklahoma where she was exposed to art at a very young age. Knowing the importance of art Emily's grandmother, also an artist, handed her a 1976 *Playboy* at the age of seven, and instructed her to draw the figures as it was the most valuable lesson. She continued to nourish her artistic gift throughout her adolescence experimenting with multiple mediums (sculpture, painting, photography, drawing, and writing.) Once out of the military Emily moved from Arizona to Alaska with her family where she enrolled in UAA in the Arts program. Emily continues to push the ideas of photography and mediums with her collaborative photo series shown here.

CLINTON JACKSON

Throughout his life, Clinton has been noted to be a man of many roads, after the fashion of his favorite author Louis L'Amour. His lifelong deafness (since birth) has been instrumental in his perception and insight into various aspects of life: especially how people interact with each other. He has shown by his conduct to be keenly interested in enhancing the quality of life of people whom he comes into contact with and his warmth has been well received. His various interests include, linguistics, multi-trade craftsmanship, a hearer of old stories, and an improvisational storyteller.

K. ARIELLE JOHNSON*

Born under the sign of the Ram in the year of the Snake, Ms. Arielle Johnson is an avid bicyclist and amateur seamstress who enjoys the music of Todd Rundgren. This is her third year in *Understory*.

CAITLIN KELLEYROSE

Caitlin KelleyRose grew up in South Bend, Indiana. After high school she received her AAS in Equine Management from Parkland College. She is now one semester away from graduating with her BA in Art with an emphasis in Photography along with a minor in History. She is passionate about all of her work and loves collaborating with other artists of all different mediums.

CHELSEA KLUSEWITZ

Chelsea Klusewitz is currently working towards completing her BFA here at UAA and is looking forward to her Thesis show in the near future. Her art is primarily focused in drawing, but she has recently been exploring other mediums including oil paints and watercolors, as can be seen in her pieces for *Understory*. Chelsea feels fortunate to have been able to travel the world prior to becoming part of the UAA family, and would like to thank her parents and siblings for all of their support.

DANIELLE LARSEN

Danielle Larsen earned a BA in English (2003). After graduation she worked as a public relations professional focusing on event planning, graphic design, curating and writing. Working in the design area and being engaged in artistic outlets inspired her to return to her alma mater to further develop her talents in painting. As an urban Alaska Native, she spent childhood summers in the camping and fishing areas in southcentral Alaska instilling in her a love of nature. While in school, Danielle was fascinated by the medium of woodcarving and the production of Alaska Native art masks. These indigenous references continue to be a major leitmotif in her work. She is currently working towards a BFA in Painting and Alaska Native art and will graduate in the Spring of 2015.

CRAIG MILEY*

Craig Miley is currently pursuing a BA in English and a minor in Creative Writing and Literary Art. He aspires to be a full-time writer and considers his stories' selection in *Understory* an honor and a step toward that goal. In order to sustain these studies and dreams, Craig works as a veterinary technician at Cornerstone Animal Hospital.

DRÉA MOORE*

Andréa "Dréa" Moore was born and raised in Houston, Texas and found love in Alaska in 2008. Always interested in the process of making art, especially the getting messy part, it was no big surprise that she fell in love with making ceramic art. Sculpting with clay feels like traveling back in time, playing in the mud as a kid, and being one with nature. Dréa is currently getting a kick out of researching bugs and sculpting larger-than-life bugs while working towards her BFA in Handbuilt Ceramics.

AUBREY MORGAN

Starting her way at UAF and working her way through the branches of UAA, Aubrey Morgan will receive her BFA degree in Painting this Spring. Her artworks often reflect a strong influence from fictional stories, cartoons, and animals. While she concentrates on painting, Aubrey also studies sculpture, drawing and native arts. She is grateful for the opportunity to be in *Understory* for the second time, and appreciates all the faculty and staff involved.

DANIELLE MORGAN

Danielle Morgan is pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree, with the intention of applying to the Fine Arts program in the near future. If all else fails, becoming a crazy cat lady and keeper of keys at Hogwarts doesn't sound too shabby, either.

YOUNGER OLIVER*

Younger Oliver is a senior English Literature major with a minor in Communications. When she is not working on completing her thesis on Hamlet, she enjoys Kafka, Netflix, anything Disney, and her (unhealthy) addiction to Rockstar energy drinks. After graduation in May 2014, she plans to take a year off before pursuing a PhD in Education Policy.

WOLFGANG Q. OLSSON

Wolfgang Q. Olsson is a 19-year-old poet from Eagle River, Alaska, currently studying English at UAA. He began writing as soon as he could read—filling up pages with fanciful, dark, and contemplative tales. The themes of his work often concern Alaska, nature, modern life, violence, and death. Furthermore, he is a cellist, composer, and film enthusiast.

SARAH REEVES

Sarah Reeves is an English major in her second year at UAA and hopes to graduate with a minor in Creative Writing in the Spring of 2017. She's wanted to be a writer since before she had the ability to read. Sarah finds inspiration in the strangest of places and often spends nights awake to ungodly hours just to get the ideas out of her head.

PATRICK ROMAIN JR.

Patrick Romain Jr. is an artist and Photographer based out of Anchorage, Alaska. He is currently studying art at UAA and hopes to pursue a career in Graphic Design.

JENNA! ROOSDETT*

Jenna! Fleur Roosdett, born and raised in Anchorage, Alaska, is a Graphic Designer and Photographer graduating in the Spring of 2014 from the Bachelor of Fine Arts program. Her inspiration stems from getting inside people's heads, asking questions, and exploiting desires. She loves being active in her community as well as being immersed in a world developed by creatives and scientists. Jenna!'s many loves also include advertising, animals, expanding her blu-ray collection and appreciating the small things in life. Always hoping to learn something new, Jenna! switched jobs for her senior year to become *The Northern Light's* Layout Editor and is excited to graduate and move on to achieve her dreams and goals.

ELISE RAE SCHAPIRA

Elise Rae Schapira is graduating this Spring with a Bachelor of Arts in Economics. She has been at UAA for five years, living on and off campus including one exchange year in New York. She encourages others to explore the UAA campus, find a club that feels like family, and participate in an exchange program. She believes if you explore and seek growth, you will leave college feeling fulfilled and accomplished.

ALYX SHROY

Alyxandra "Alyx" Shroy started drawing stick figures as a small child. (She still does that sometimes.) Today she is a senior in the Anthropology program who enjoys drawing and crafting in her spare time. Her favourite media are ink, watercolor, and markers, and much of her inspiration is drawn from cave art, water damage, neuronal structures, anthropology, microscopic patterns, and anime.

AJA STEWART

Aja is one of those old souls who love to be friends with everyone. She enjoys spending her days playing any instrument she can get her hands on, writing all sorts of stories, working on artwork, traveling the world, and learning as much as she can every day. Possibly her favorite thing in the world is spending time with her family, even if it's a small car ride to the store or out at dinner. She is currently finishing up her Bachelor's in English Literature with an Art minor, and she cannot wait to share her stories with the world.

XENIA JOY VLIEGER

Xenia Joy graduated from UAA in December 2013 with her BA in Art with an emphasis in Photography. Xenia is a self-portrait artist and her art often draws upon literature and fantasy for inspiration. She hopes that her work transports the viewer to another reality where magical things are possible and where imagination is the only limiting factor.

ANASTASIA WARD

Anastasia Ward is a budding illustrator that dabbles in both children's book and epic fantasy paintings. She enjoys spending her time honing her craft, laughing with friends, and playing with her four birds.

FOREST WILSON

Palmer born and Alaskan grown for a little over twenty-one years now, Forest Wilson is currently enrolled at UAA as an English Major. He hopes to minor in creative writing, and he fully plans on writing creatively for a long time. His favorite book is "To Kill A Mockingbird," by Harper Lee.

un-der-sto-ry

[uhn-der-stohr-ee] n.

an underlying layer of vegetation; specifically the vegetative layer, especially the trees and shrubs between the forest canopy and ground cover. The understory is a source of rich diversity, beauty, and often extreme fragility.

Caitlin Kelley Rose

Sluggs

Chelsea Klusewitz

Younger G. Oliver

Caitlin Kelley Rose

Emily K. Hall

Danielle Morgan

Aubrey Morgan

Danielle Darsen

Allen Darsen

Elise Schapira

Wolfgang J. Olson

J. Pennum

Joshua Pennum

aj m. Sledge

Alison G. Sledge

Erin Collins
Mara Capin

Xenia Joy

Dries M.

Paul Paul Paul